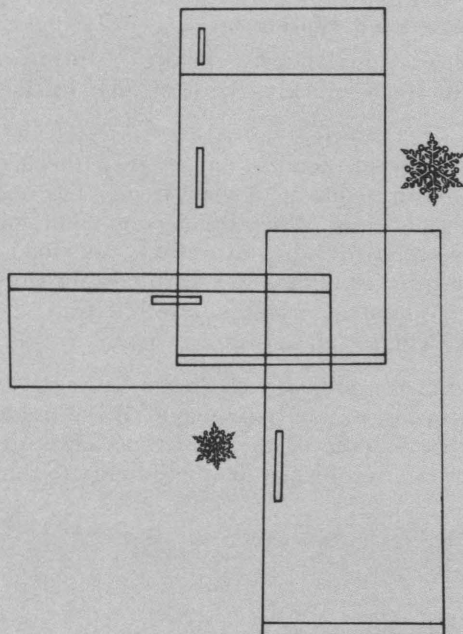


# FACT SHEET

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## When Your Home Freezer Stops

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Occasionally food freezers stop operating normally and foods may be thawed or partially thawed before the situation is discovered. What can be done when this happens?

### REFREEZING FOOD

You may safely refreeze foods that have thawed if they still contain ice crystals or if they are still cold—about 40° F—and have been held no longer than 1 or 2 days at refrigerator temperature after thawing. In general, if a food is safe to eat, it is safe to refreeze. If the odor or color of any food is poor or questionable, dispose of it. The food may be dangerous.

Foods that have been frozen and thawed require the same care as foods that have not been frozen.

### Meat, Poultry, Fish

Meat, including ground meat and poultry, that has any off-odor or off-color should not be refrozen

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and should not be eaten. The eating quality of red meats is reduced less than that of other foods.

### Shellfish, Vegetables, Cooked Foods

Bacteria multiply rapidly in shellfish, vegetables and cooked foods and often spoilage in these foods cannot be detected by odor. Do not refreeze any of these foods when they have completely thawed. If ice crystals are still in the food, refreeze immediately. Even partial thawing and refreezing reduces the eating quality of these foods. If the condition of these foods is questionable, dispose of them.

### Ice Cream

Thawed ice cream should not be refrozen.

### Fruits

Fruits usually ferment when they start to spoil. A little fermentation will not make fruits dangerous to eat, but it may spoil their flavor. You can refreeze thawed fruits if they still taste and smell good. Or you can use them in cooking and baking or for making jams, jellies and prepared foods.

## EMERGENCY CARE

Generally, a fully loaded, non-functioning freezer will stay cold enough to keep foods frozen for two days if not opened. In a freezer with less than half a load, food will remain frozen for about one day.

If power fails or the freezer stops due to mechanical failure, keep the freezer closed except when adding dry ice. If normal operation cannot be resumed before the foods start to thaw, use dry ice or move foods to a locker plant.

**Dry Ice.** If dry ice is placed in the freezer soon after the power is off, 25 pounds should keep the temperature below freezing for 2 to 3 days in a 10-cubic-foot cabinet with half a load; 3 to 4 days in a loaded cabinet.

Place the dry ice on cardboard or small boards on top of packages and do not open freezer again except to put in more dry ice or to remove it when normal operation is resumed.

**Locker Plant.** If it is necessary to move food to a locker plant, use insulated boxes, blankets or thick layers of paper to prevent thawing. Food which has been moved to the locker plant should be chilled to 0° F. before moving again after your food freezer is operating normally.

### Refreeze Food Quickly

Clean your freezer before refilling. Freeze thawed foods quickly. Use refrozen foods as soon as possible.

To refreeze food at home, turn the adjustable temperature control, if your freezer has one, to its coldest position. When the current comes on again, the freezer will run continuously and food will refreeze quicker. Place the warmer packages against the refrigerated surface if possible, but place them so air will circulate around them.

After the food is well frozen, turn the temperature control to its usual setting. If the freezer is too full, move some of the colder packages to the refrigerator, and return them gradually to the freezer.

References: H&GB 162 *Keeping Food Safe* (USDA)  
L-321 *What to Do When Your Freezer Stops* (USDA)

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10M-12-74